



## What You Should Know if You Need Medicare-covered Equipment or Supplies

### Information About the Medicare Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies (DMEPOS) Competitive Bidding Program

Starting July 1, 2008, Medicare is phasing in a new program (competitive bidding) to help save you and Medicare money; ensure that you continue to get quality equipment, supplies, and services; and help limit fraud and abuse. In some areas of the country if you need certain items, you must use contract suppliers (suppliers who participate in the competitive bidding program), or Medicare won't pay for the item and you will likely pay full price. It's important to see if you are affected by this new program to ensure Medicare coverage and avoid any disruption of service.

You should first find out if your area is included in this program. If it is, you can find out what equipment and supplies are included in the program in your area. Then you can find out which suppliers may provide you with your Medicare-covered equipment and supplies. There are two ways to find this information:

- Visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) and select "Find Suppliers of Medical Equipment in Your Area." You can use this web tool to find suppliers even if your area isn't included in the program. After you enter your ZIP code, if you see a message that "this ZIP code is within a Competitive Bidding Area (CBA)," then your area is included in this program. The equipment and supplies included in the program, and the specific suppliers you need to use will have a star beside their names.
- Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048. You can also call your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) for free health insurance counseling and personalized help understanding this program. Visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) or call 1-800-MEDICARE for their telephone number.



## **Am I affected if I'm in a Medicare Advantage Plan?**

If you're enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan, your plan will notify you if your supplier is changing. If you're unsure, you should contact your plan.

## **Do I have to change doctors?**

No. The program doesn't affect which doctors you can use.

## **What about medical equipment and supplies I get from my doctor?**

Your doctor or treating health care provider (including physician assistants, clinical nurse specialists, and nurse practitioners) can supply a walker to you, even if he or she isn't a supplier for the competitive bidding program, as long as the walker is part of their professional services for you.

## **What if I need a specific brand of item or supply?**

If you need a specific brand of equipment or supplies, or you need the item in a specific form, your doctor must prescribe the specific brand or form in writing. Your doctor must also document in your medical record that you need this specific brand or form for medical reasons.

Your contract supplier will fill your doctor's prescription as written. If the item isn't available, the supplier will either work with your doctor or treating health care provider to find an appropriate alternative, or help you locate another contract supplier who can meet your needs.

## **Do I have to change suppliers if I rent equipment from a supplier who isn't participating in the program?**

If you are currently renting certain medical equipment or oxygen, you may have the choice to stay with your current supplier. Suppliers who aren't participating in the program can become "grandfathered" suppliers. A "grandfathered" supplier may continue to rent equipment to a person with Medicare who permanently lives in an area included in the program if the supplier rented the equipment to the person before the program started. This rule applies only to certain equipment that can be rented, oxygen, and oxygen supplies. You may continue using the "grandfathered" supplier until the rental period for your equipment ends. If you rent additional equipment from a "grandfathered" supplier after July 1, the equipment won't be covered by Medicare.



## What if I travel to one of the areas included in this program and need to get medical equipment or supplies?

If you travel to an area included in the program, you must get any medical equipment or supplies included in the program from a contract supplier.

If you permanently live in...	And travel to...	Type of supplier you may go to...
An area participating in the program	A different area participating in the program	A contract supplier located in the area you traveled to for items included in the program*
An area participating in the program	An area NOT participating in the program	Any Medicare-approved supplier
An area NOT participating in the program	An area participating in the program	A contract supplier located in the area you traveled to for items included in the program*
An area NOT participating in the program	An area NOT participating in the program	Any Medicare-approved supplier

\*If you don't use a contract supplier, the supplier may ask you to sign an Advance Beneficiary Notice. This notice says Medicare probably won't pay for the item or service. The supplier will probably require you to pay for the full cost of the item.

## If I travel to one of the areas included in this program, will I pay the same amount I pay at home?

Whether or not you live in an area participating in the program, the Medicare payment to a supplier is determined by where you permanently live. Your out-of-pocket costs will be the same as when you are at your permanent home. You will still be responsible for paying the 20% coinsurance after meeting your annual Part B deductible.

It is important to know that for any equipment or supplies that are included in the competitive bidding program, the contract supplier can't charge you more than the 20% coinsurance and any unmet annual deductible. If you suspect that you are paying more coinsurance than the Medicare allowed amount, you can call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048. You can also call the Fraud Hotline of the HHS Office of Inspector General at 1-800-447-8477. TTY users should call 1-800-377-4950.



## **How does Medicare pay for equipment or supplies if I have other insurance?**

If your primary insurance policy requires you to use a supplier that doesn't participate in the program, Medicare may make a secondary payment to that supplier. The supplier must meet Medicare enrollment standards and be eligible to receive secondary payments. For more information, check with your benefits administrator, insurer, or your plan provider.